

**HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON
WATER FOR AGRICULTURE AND ENERGY IN AFRICA:
THE CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

Sirte, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
15-17 December 2008

First Steering Committee Meeting
Thursday 5 June 2008 - 10:00-12:00 hrs
Pakistan Room (A-127)

Minutes of the Meeting

The First Steering Committee Meeting took place at FAO Headquarters in Rome during the High-Level Conference on World Food Security: the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy. The meeting was chaired by H.E. Mr Abu Baker Al-Mabrouk Al-Mansouri, Secretary of the General People's Committee of the Authority for Agriculture, Animal Wealth and Marine Resources.

A short presentation illustrated the rationale for the conference, its objectives and plan for implementation. The proposed structure of the conference was commonly endorsed by members of the committee, but the number and the topics of the keynote/issue papers to be presented during the first day of the Conference took up a long part of the discussion. The members of the committee proposed several topics that could be possibly considered and developed into issue papers. A wide list emerged and found a great consensus, though there is still room for further discussion and for more topics to be added. The prospectus which emerged from the First Steering Committee reads as follows:

- Water for the rural poor
- The interrelations between land and water: land degradation and the emerging scarcity of water in the context of combating desertification
- Water and energy transfer
- Identification of the "African commodity belts"
- The two sides of the African agriculture: commodity driven investments and small, poor, multi-cropping farmers
- The bio-crops: assessing the risk on water and land
- The empowerment of traditional technologies combining traditional and advanced approaches
- Desalinisation technologies
- Project implementation in Africa
- The comparative advantages in Africa
- Mobilizing internal resources: from the central federal support to the local support

Important remarks were made concerning the participatory process that will lead to a successful event and to widely shared conclusions. The involvement of AMCOW, which is already engaged in several issues concerning water and energy in Africa, of the African Network of Basin Organizations, and of the African NGOs is fundamental to strengthen the outputs of the Conference through a larger participation. Special attention should also be given to the private sector since in most of the countries there is always space for the private sector investment. However, the focus should not be diverted from the internal capacities of African countries: the ODA is not the only source of implementation; instead, Africa should mainly depend on its internal resources and capabilities.

The members of the Steering Committee unanimously agreed in considering the Conference as follow-up to the Sirte 2004 Conference: The Challenges of Implementing Integrated and Sustainable Development on Agriculture and Water in Africa. They also

emphasised the need to build on what had already been achieved since Sirte 2004. Therefore, the Sirte 2004 Declaration should be carefully examined and the issues included in it, especially those that have not yet been effectively implemented, e.g. the establishment of the Centres of Excellence), will be identified and tackled. Furthermore, the progress which has been made since 2004, namely with the Abuja Conference (2006) and the Regional Integration on Agriculture and Development, will have to be considered as a starting point for further actions.

In particular, the members of the Steering Committee agreed on a shared vision for the Conference: long term vision-oriented, namely, dynamic visionary framework. The Conference will not be a platform to simply discuss the situation of water resources and poverty in Africa, but its major objective should be to achieve solid outcomes and present plans and mechanisms to implement these plans to be submitted to donors for their endorsement and commitment. In other words "Action Oriented" is what the Conference should be.

A list of the suggested themes will be distributed and finalized in the next Steering Committee meeting as well as a work plan to be put in place. The baseline should be always Sirte 2004 and a shared declaration for Sirte 2008 should be implemented in stages and should start immediately.